

Boston Harbor Islands Partnership
Meeting Minutes
WilmerHale, 60 State Street, 26th Floor, Boston, MA
May 20, 2014, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM

Attendees: Elizabeth Solomon—Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council; Jane Ellis and Phil Griffiths—Boston Harbor Island Alliance (BHIA); Richard McGuiness—Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA); Brian Swett—City of Boston; Jack Murray and Susan Kane—Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR); Andrew Hargens—Massachusetts Port Authority; Marianne Connolly—Massachusetts Water Resources Authority; Giles Parker—National Park Service (NPS); CDR Marc Knowlton—United States Coast Guard (USCG).

Commissioner Jack Murray, Acting Chair, welcomed all and called the meeting to order. The minutes of the March 18, 2014 meeting were approved.

State of the Park

Marc Albert, NPS, thanked all who participated in the State of the Park Workshop on April 10 and 11. He reminded all the purpose of the workshop was to develop a plain language snapshot of the status and trend in the condition of park's priority resources and values. The report can also can serve as a summary of management accomplishments and challenges. Marc gave an overview of the NPS planning framework and said the State of the Park Report, while not a planning document itself, will serve to inform other planning efforts such as the resource stewardship strategy currently scheduled to be drafted this fall.

Marc said that outcomes will include a printed report with an executive summary and a “drill down” website version along with a multi-purpose database that will serve as a long-term repository for the information. He said that having so many subject matter experts engaged with the process has already had positive outcomes. One example of this is that the NPS infrastructure asset database used for funding requests will begin to be utilized for Partner properties. Giles added that the discussions at the workshop kick-started efforts to assess the condition of Fort Warren and the dock at Thompson Island.

The Partners discussed. Commissioner Murray said that if the report provides a quantifiable data, it could be useful as a justification for funding requests. Marc said report might also be a way to evaluate partnership effectiveness. Marianne Connolly noted that there were many NPS staff from outside of the park that did not seem familiar with how the Partnership operates. She also asked if today's park visitation numbers could be compared to past years. Marc said the data does exist and if it is useful, it can be incorporated into the report.

Water Transportation and Service Providers

Jane Ellis, BHIA, reported that ferry ridership during the park opening weekend was 7 times higher this year than last. This is attributed to having a new vendor with higher capacity boats and better weather. Alison Nolan, Boston Harbor Cruises (BHC), said that it was a great couple of weeks and that the high turnout the first weekend was a good test of operations. She looks forward to a great summer. Jane said that MBTA ferry service to the islands begins on May 24 from Hingham. She said that she received positive feedback about the new food vendor, Rita's

Catering. They are still working on signage and fine tuning operations. The gift stores operated by Eastern National will open on weekends starting on Memorial Day weekend. A cart will be added to Georges Island. Mass Maritime will manage the Spectacle Island marina and park moorings.

Jane said park managers are exploring possibilities of expanding the number of park moorings. The Partners discussed placement priorities and hoped that they could be expanded harbor-wide, but particularly near hub islands.

Lou Gainor, Boston Harbor Islands Advisory Council, asked if there was a moorings time limit and if they can be used overnight. There are several in the harbor and they all follow different reservation policies. The moorings on Spectacle are for day use and have a fee. Lou said that moorings should not replace anchorage sites. He added that it is very difficult for private boaters to visit Georges Island. Susan Kane said pick up and drop off at Georges will be permitted this year.

Marketing and Programming Update

Mike Dyer, BHIA, gave a quick overview of park marketing efforts and programs. He passed out a boating guide, which was distributed to yacht clubs and marinas. There are plans to create a series of guides for the visitor. The park newspaper is under production. Program offerings are expanding and drawing new audiences. Fifty-five libraries now have discounted tickets available. There are new programs like “South Shore Moves” that target south shore residents. Free access for youth opportunities are also expanding with a new program for over 600 youth from Boys and Girls Clubs to visit the park. Young professionals are becoming a larger audience due to the park’s social media presence. There are five new junior ranger program books now available on the islands. There will be at least two Free Ferry Days this year, one in June and one in August.

Boston Light Update

Sally Snowman, USCG, said that the U.S. Coast Guard continues to prepare for the 300th Anniversary of Boston Light in 2016. A variety of infrastructure improvements are planned for the tower, keeper’s house, outbuildings, and other systems. She said that since Little Brewster Island will not be open for Boston Light tours this season because of the complex construction schedule, volunteers are hard at work creating a presentation to share with the public at a series of talks.

Other Business

Marianne Connolly said that MWRA has a mobile water station that travels to events to educate the public about where their drinking water comes from. It was suggested that this unit would be useful on Long Wharf during free ferry days, if there was a potable water source it could be attached to.

Stuart Dalzell, MASSPORT, noted that a proposed dredging project for Boston Harbor got a boost when federal funding for the \$310M project was included in legislation that authorizes water projects throughout the country. The dredging is needed to accommodate bigger cargo ships and to stay competitive with other ports.

CDR Marc Knowlton reported that the change of command ceremony for the Port of Boston will happen on Friday. Rear Admiral Dan Abel will be relieved, and Rear Admiral Linda Fagan will assume command. CAPT John O'Connor will be briefing her on the Boston Light and the 300th Anniversary preparations.

Phil Griffiths reported that the work on the chapel on Peddocks Island is almost complete, and that the improvement project took the collaboration of many organizations, and individual efforts. It should be finished by the start of the summer season.

Advisory Council

Elizabeth Solomon said that council members participated in the State of the Park Workshop. She invited all to the next meeting on June 11.

Public Comment

The meeting was adjourned.